

Automotive Manufacturers – your views matter

By Ian Henry, Owner and Managing Director of AutoAnalysis and Visiting Professor at the Centre for Brexit Studies.

As Brexit, in whatever form, appears to be imminent, it is important that local and regional policy makers and authorities listen to the voice of industry .

I have been fortunate enough to work with industry and public bodies in a number of regions across in the UK and have seen the benefits of close engagement between these bodies and local manufacturing industry. Key to this has been understanding the challenges and issues facing companies in these regions. If nothing else, Brexit is increasing the scale of the challenge and difficulties facing manufacturing companies.

Brexit means that thousands of jobs across manufacturing, logistics and support services are at risk from changing strategies at the Midlands' major employers which will inevitably follow.

As a result, it is especially good timing that the Centre for Brexit Studies, with the support of the West Midlands Combined Authority, is undertaking a survey of the automotive, rail and aerospace sector to understand the pressing issues facing the region's manufacturing supply base as a whole.

The survey is designed to develop a detailed picture of how manufacturers throughout the supply chain operate, how they send goods to clients, how they access materials from their suppliers and how they see these operations as at risk from Brexit.

The automotive industry alone supports around 800,000 jobs in the UK. Around half of these are in and around the Midlands, exposing the region to particular risk in the event of a 'No Deal' Brexit; but risks exist even if a deal with the EU is secured.

While a No Deal scenario would lead inevitably to tariffs, customs delays and technical trade barriers, hitting the efficient supply chains

which underpin the automotive sector especially, even a Deal Agreed scenario will have an impact on the industry on investment decisions, trade flows and logistics practicalities.

Borrowing a few lines from the press release which we sent out recently, I'd like to repeat how: "This survey is designed to quantify the value of the automotive and other key manufacturing sectors in the West Midlands, and identify the key problems and issues facing large and small suppliers alike as Brexit approaches.

"The results will be invaluable in helping to scope the policy response in the region, from both local and national government bodies. We very much encourage companies to respond – the better the response the better and more focused the help available can be."

I sincerely hope manufacturers of all shapes and sizes can find the time to complete our survey – it really shouldn't take more than 10 minutes. We would very much appreciate your input to help us shape the advice we give to regional bodies on developing appropriate strategies to help the region post-Brexit.

You can complete the survey entirely anonymously, and if you would like a (free) detailed, face-to-face or telephone discussion with a senior member of the team, there is a space in the survey form to provide us with your details. I hope we can help you.

I can only repeat how, having undertaken similar exercises elsewhere in the country, the results will be invaluable in shaping policy to support the industry – but to shape policy, we really need manufacturers to give us their input. So, manufacturing companies, your country – or rather your region – needs your input, and as soon as possible please.

Having extolled the virtues of the survey, I'll finish with [the link here to take part in the survey](#) – please grab a coffee or tea, may be a biscuit too, and click. Thanks very much.